



City of Seattle

Office of City Auditor
Susan Cohen, City Auditor

January 25, 2002

The Honorable Greg Nickels, Mayor
Seattle City Councilmembers
The City of Seattle
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Mayor Nickels and Councilmembers:

The Office of City Auditor reviewed the Department of Parks and Recreation's athletic field scheduling process at the request of the Seattle City Council. Our review concludes that Parks has allocated fields in a manner consistent with their scheduling policies and priorities. However, Parks could improve field scheduling performance with a few policy, procedure and technology enhancements.

Parks' current field scheduling policy provides priority access for youth sports groups, which restricts adult groups. Our analysis of Parks' field scheduling indicates that overall athletic field use has increased 14 percent over the last five years. Youth field use has increased 21 percent, while adult field use has decreased one percent over the last five years.

Given limited field resources and the increased demand for fields, the following action items were suggested to improve athletic field scheduling practices:

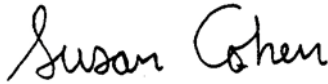
- Review the field scheduling policy to determine if allocation priorities are reasonable;
- Include scheduling priorities and field closures/limitations with the Sports Participation Policy;
- Disseminate the Sports Participation Policy annually;
- Document standard operating procedures for the athletic field scheduling process;
- Cross-train Parks personnel to backfill the Athletic Facilities Scheduler position;
- Improve athletic field scheduling software;
- Update the Parks' Complaints/Compliments Policy.

We provided Parks staff numerous opportunities to comment on our draft report and have incorporated their comments, as appropriate, into this published report. We have also appended Parks' formal Executive Response to the audit report. Parks concurred with our observations and offered a timeline to implement the major action items.

We appreciate the cooperation of the Department of Parks and Recreation during the review process. If you have further questions regarding this review, please feel free to contact me at 233-1093.

To improve our work, we ask our readers to complete the evaluation form at the back of this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "S" and a distinct "C" for "Cohen".

Susan Cohen
City Auditor

SC:DN:tlb
Attachment

Department of Parks and Recreation Athletic Field Scheduling Review



**Office of City Auditor
January 25, 2002**



Office of City Auditor

Department of Parks and Recreation Athletic Field Scheduling Review

January 25, 2002

**Auditors In-Charge: Dan Nygaard
Yanira Cuellar**

Audit Manager: Susan Baugh

City Auditor: Susan Cohen

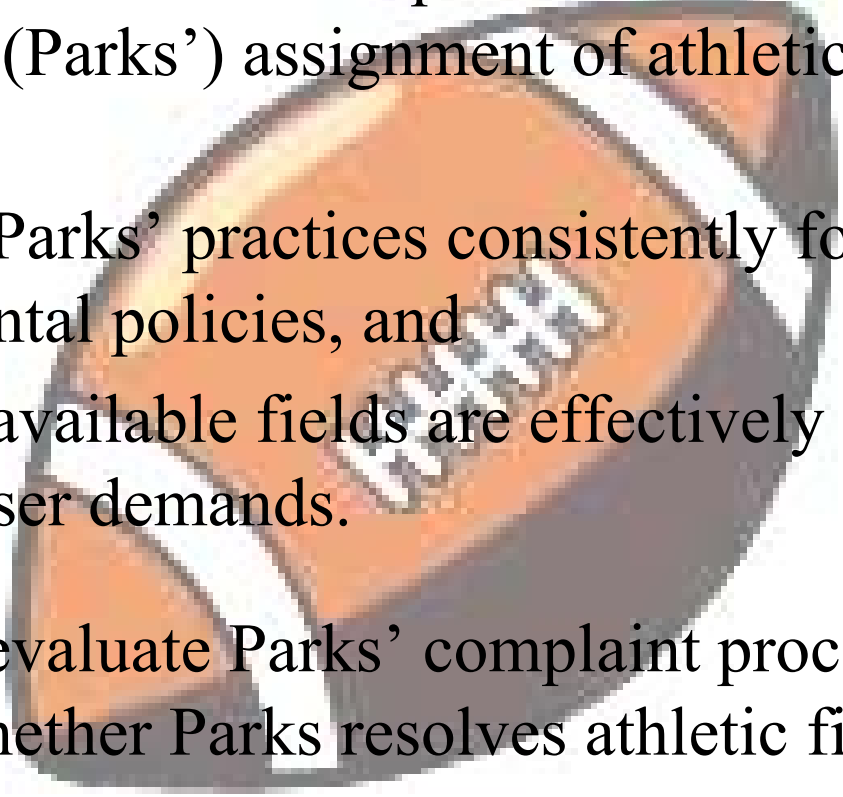
Project Team: Minh Pham

Thao Vu

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Objectives

- 
- ★ Review and evaluate the Department of Parks and Recreation's (Parks') assignment of athletic fields to determine:
 - Whether Parks' practices consistently follow departmental policies, and
 - Whether available fields are effectively allocated to meet user demands.
 - ★ Review and evaluate Parks' complaint process to determine whether Parks resolves athletic field prioritization and assignment issues effectively.

Summary

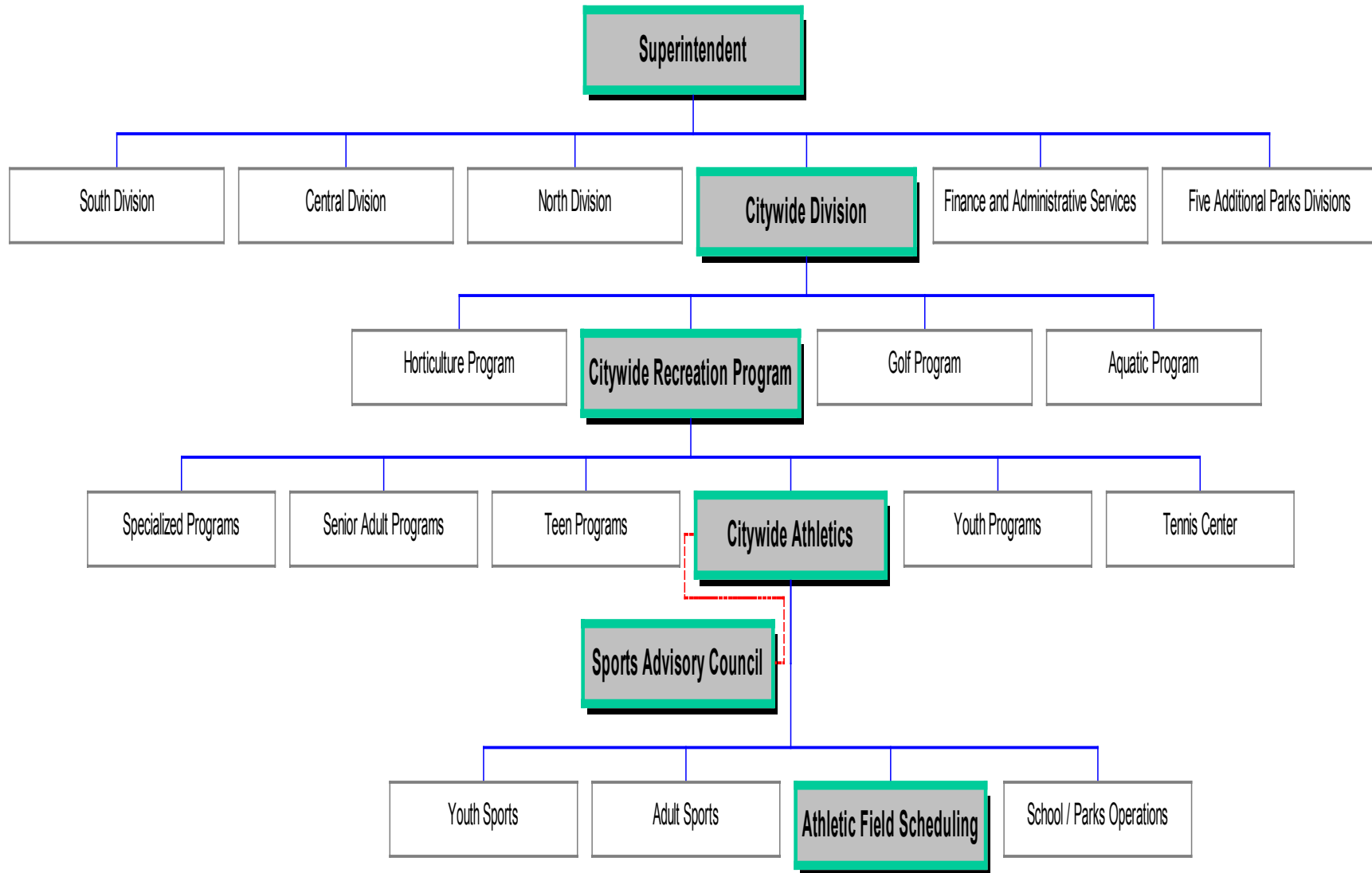
- ★ Parks consistently schedules athletic fields in compliance with established policies for the prioritization and assignment of fields.
- ★ Parks athletic field use is at or near capacity during peak times, which will restrict future field scheduling expansion.
- ★ Parks could improve the efficiency of field scheduling practices by documenting standard operating procedures and enhancing athletic field scheduling software.
- ★ Parks could resolve complaints more efficiently by updating complaint procedures.

Scope and Methodology

- ★ Reviewed copies of Parks' policies and procedures for the scheduling of athletic fields.
- ★ Determined the impact of the policies and procedures on the leagues using athletic fields.
- ★ Reviewed annual athletic field scheduling data for 1995, 1997 and 2000.
- ★ Reviewed copies of policies and procedures for Parks' complaint process.
- ★ Followed generally accepted government auditing standards.

Parks Background

Organizational Chart



Parks Background

Guiding Principles

★ Mission:

Seattle Parks and Recreation will work with all citizens to be good stewards of our environment and to provide safe and welcoming opportunities to play, learn, contemplate and build community.

★ Purpose:

The purpose of the Citywide Athletics Unit is to develop and administer athletic programs for youth and adults citywide; to work collaboratively with Parks' programs, community sports organizations and private leagues to provide opportunities to play and recreate; and to work cooperatively with public and private schools to provide facilities for their sports and recreational needs.

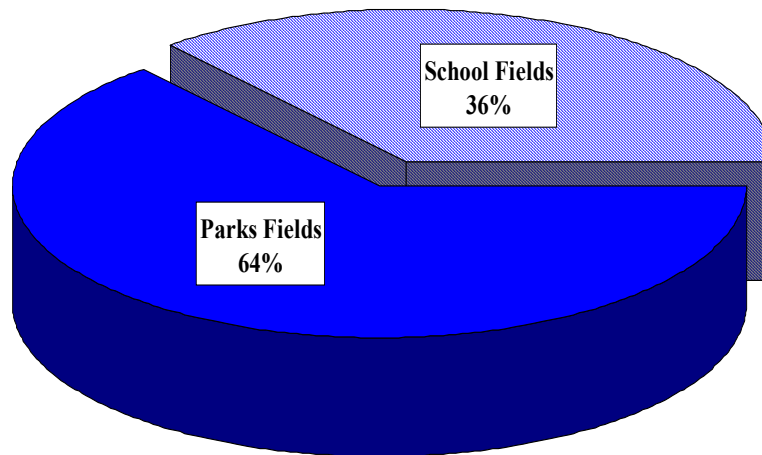
★ Services:

The Citywide Athletics Unit schedules City and Seattle School District athletic fields used by Parks' leagues, independent leagues and school programs.

Field Attributes

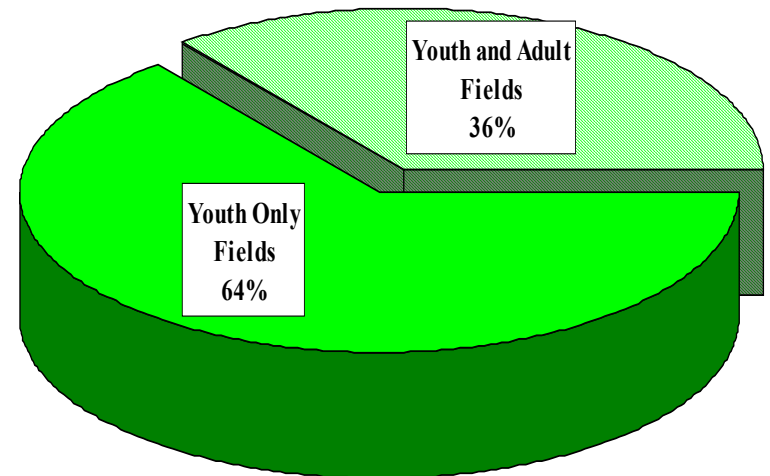
Fields Available

- ★ 203 Parks Fields
- ★ 115 Seattle School District Fields



Field Designations

- ★ 113 Youth and Adult Fields
- ★ 205 Youth Only Fields



Demographics

Adult Field Use for 2000

Top 5 Adult Sports

- ★ Softball
- ★ Soccer
- ★ Ultimate Frisbee
- ★ Baseball
- ★ Flag Football

Top 5 Adult Sports Groups

- ★ Co-Rec Soccer
- ★ Citywide Adult Softball
- ★ Practice Permits (Softball)
- ★ Sport & Social Club (Softball)
- ★ Greater Seattle Soccer



Demographics

Youth Field Use for 2000



Top 5 Youth Sports

- ★ Soccer
- ★ Softball
- ★ Baseball
- ★ Physical Education Classes
- ★ Football

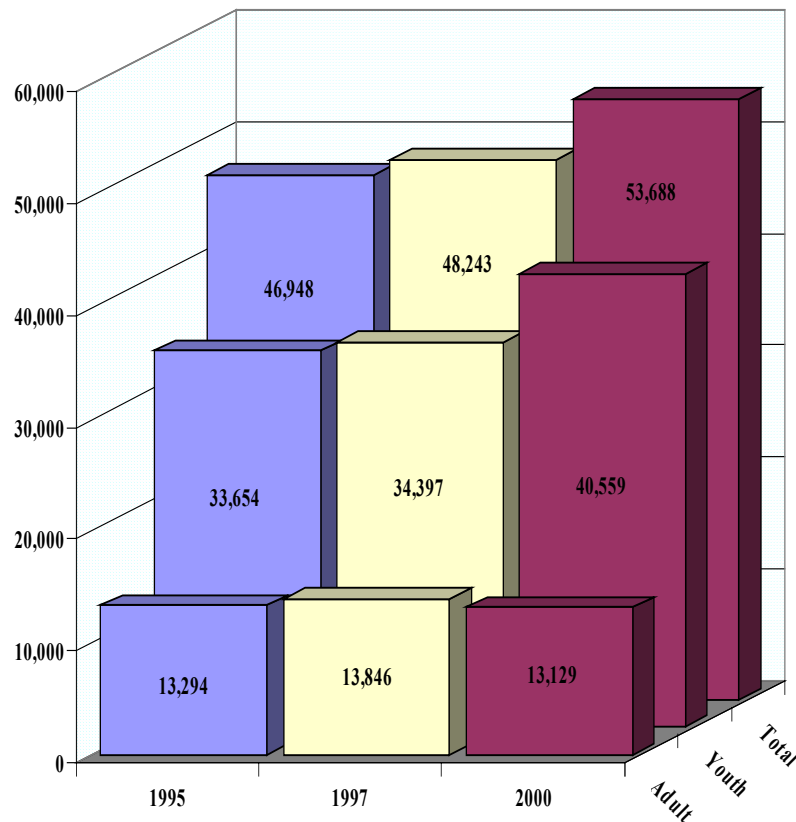
Top 5 Youth Field Users

- ★ Seattle Youth Soccer
- ★ Seattle School District
- ★ Catholic Youth Org. Soccer
- ★ West Seattle Soccer Club
- ★ North Seattle Baseball Assn.

Demographics

Demand for Athletic Fields

ATHLETIC FIELD USE SUMMARY



- ★ Increase of 14 percent in events scheduled since 1995.
- ★ Consistent interest in traditional sports such as baseball, softball, and track and field.
- ★ Increased popularity of soccer, rugby, fast-pitch softball and ultimate frisbee.
- ★ Increased interest in new sports for youth and adults.
- ★ Increased interest in year-round play for youth and adults.
- ★ Seattle School District middle school sports reintroduced.

Observation #1

- ★ **Parks consistently schedules athletic fields in compliance with established policies for the prioritization and assignment of fields.**

- ★ Parks adopted athletic field scheduling policies based upon recommendations from the Sports Advisory Council. The current policy states:
 - “The Department’s policy is to schedule fields in a manner that provides priority access for youth ...”
 - “... [I]t is the Department’s policy to provide a reasonable amount of equity for gender and some allowance for new fields sports.”
 - “Historical use will be considered in establishing priorities amongst groups or organizations seeking the same locations and/or field times.”
- ★ Parks has adhered to these athletic field scheduling priorities.

Supporting Observation #1.1

★ While Parks schedules fields based on established policies, athletic field use is nearing capacity.

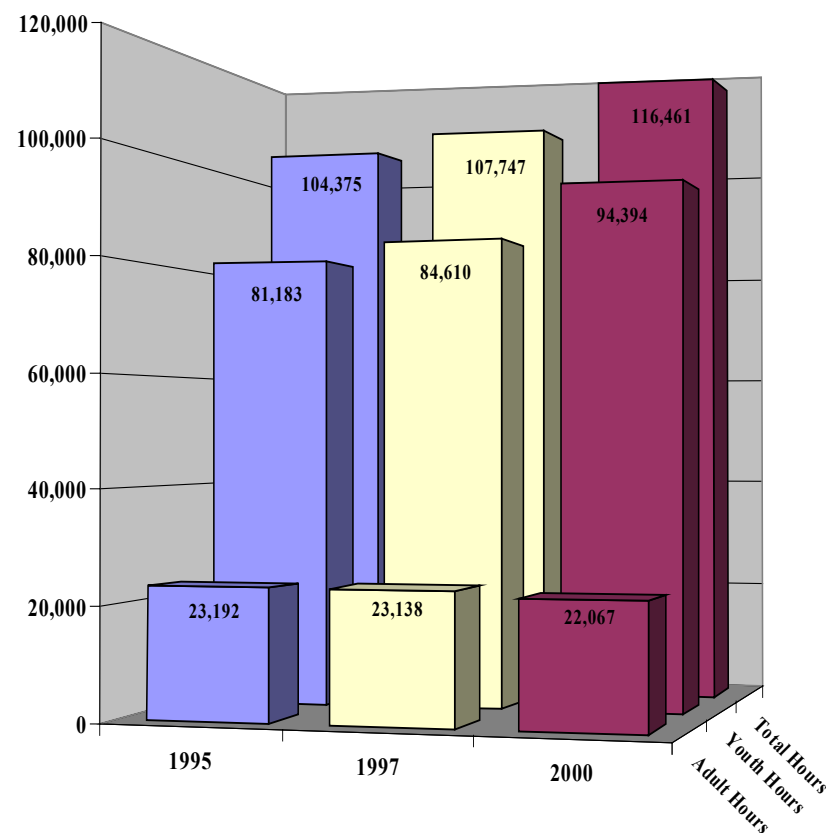
★ Total field hours have increased 12 percent since 1995.

★ Field events on Saturdays and Sundays have increased 30 percent since 1995.

★ Field events during August, September and October have increased 27 percent since 1995.

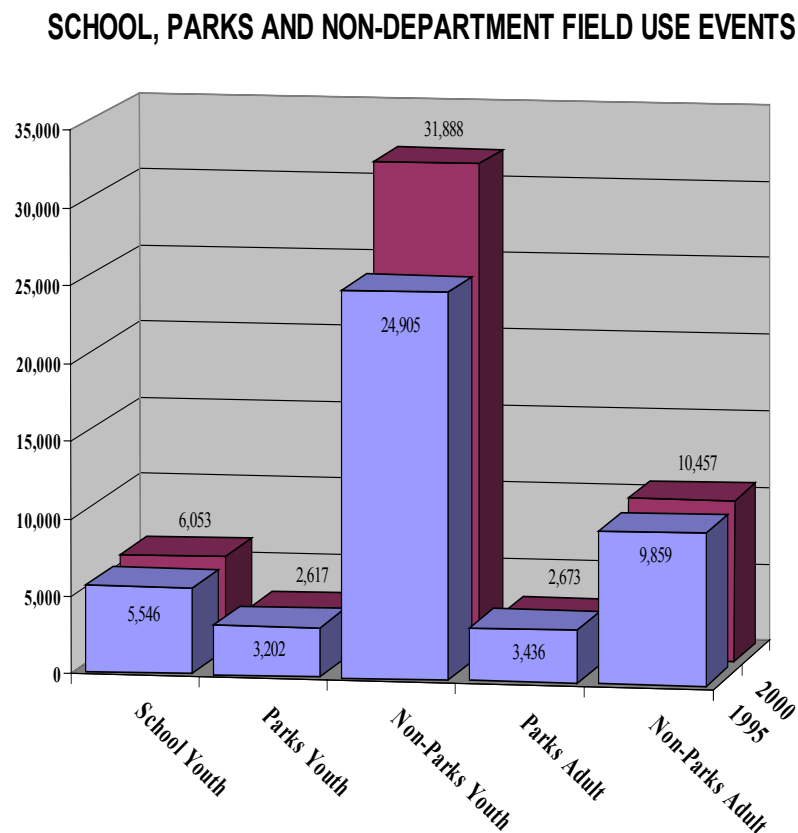
★ Athletic fields are near capacity between 3 PM and 11 PM on weekdays and before 6 PM on weekends at peak times during the spring and fall.

TOTAL ADULT & YOUTH LEAGUE FIELD HOURS



Supporting Observation #1.2

- ★ Parks current scheduling policy and practices emphasize youth sports, which limits field availability for adult sports.

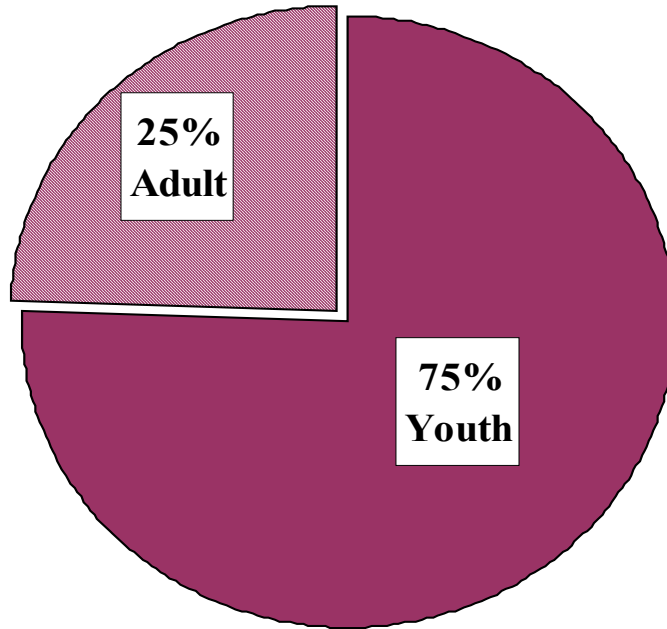


- ★ Field use events since 1995:
 - School youth up 9 percent,
 - Parks youth down 18 percent,
 - Non-Parks youth up 28 percent,
 - Parks adults down 22 percent,
 - Non-Parks adults up 6 percent.
- ★ Total youth field use increased 20 percent over the past five years, while total adult field use decreased 1 percent.
- ★ Youth can access all fields, but adults use is restricted to only 36 percent of Parks/School District fields.

Supporting Observation #1.3

- ★ Parks scheduling policy does not consider the effects of rapid growth in youth sports.

2000 ATHLETIC FIELD USE



53,688 Field Events

■ Youth	- 40,559
■ Adult	- 13,129

- ★ Youth field use currently outnumbers adult field use three to one based on current policies.
- ★ None of Parks' policies, goals or guiding principles define an acceptable level of balance of field use between youth and adult sports organizations.
- ★ The reduction of desired adult field allocations has impacted the largest adult field user.

Supporting Observation #1.4

★ Parks could clarify scheduling and participation policies.

- ★ Undefined scheduling policy terms such as “historical field use,” “reasonable amount” and “some allowance” are confusing for some athletic field users.
- ★ Parks does not adequately communicate scheduling priorities for practices and games, annual field closures and limitations, or that leagues are not guaranteed the same fields each year.
- ★ The Sports Participation Policy is not routinely disseminated to leagues. Only newly organized leagues and existing leagues with new leadership receive and sign this policy.



Action Items #1

- ★ Review the current field scheduling policy to determine whether field allocation priorities and practices are reasonable given the significant volume of youth field events scheduled.

- ★ Clarify scheduling policy terms like “historical field use,” “reasonable amount” and “some allowance” to avoid further confusion among sports groups.

Action Items #1

- ★ Include scheduling priorities, field closures and/or limitations, and a statement noting that fields are not guaranteed from year-to-year with the Sports Participation Policy.

- ★ Disseminate the Sports Participation Policy to all sports groups annually to ensure that athletic field policies and limitations are understood.

Observation #2

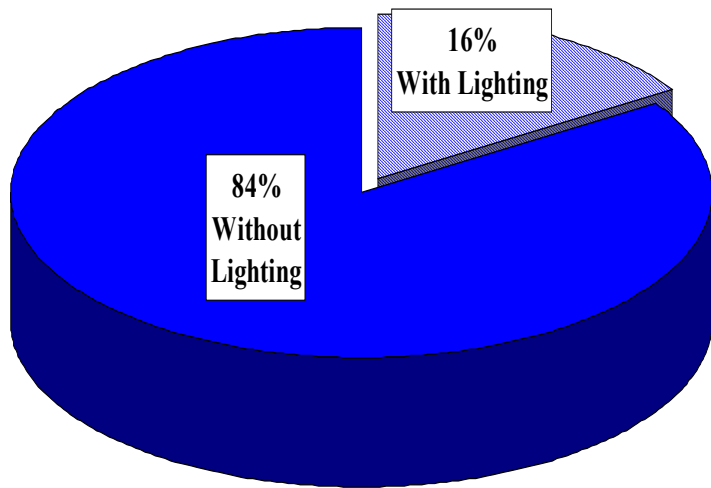
- ★ **Athletic field use is at or near capacity, which will restrict future field scheduling increases.**

- ★ Parks' athletic field capacity limitations restrict field use.
- ★ Parks has attempted to maximize the existing field capacity in an effort to meet the increased demands of sports groups by:
 - Encouraging sports groups to schedule back-to-back practices and games during peak periods.
 - Encouraging sports groups to schedule practices and games during non-peak periods.
- ★ Parks recognizes that future field scheduling increases will restrict adult and youth sports groups without additional field capacity.

Supporting Observation #2.1

- ★ Parks athletic field capacity limitations restrict field use.

ATHLETIC FIELD LIGHTING



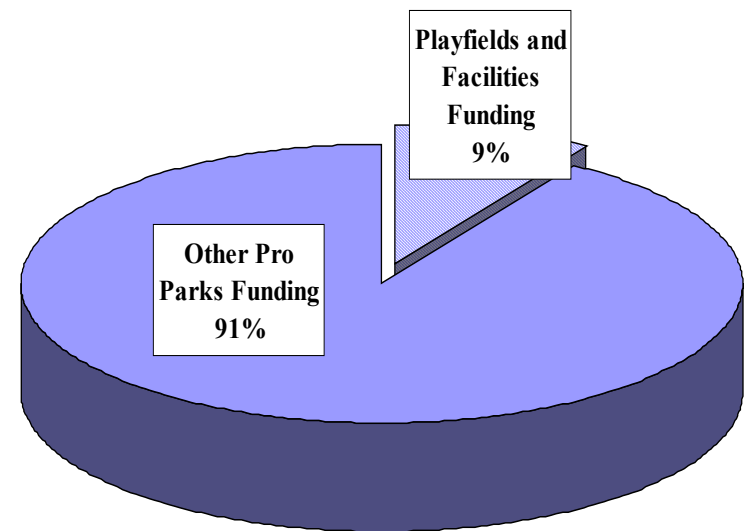
- ★ Only 50 Parks athletic fields have lighting available, so 268 fields are unusable after dark.
- ★ Only 28 of 318 athletic fields can accommodate year round play. Parks closes 290 grass fields between November and March for restoration.
- ★ Adult leagues only have access to 14 of Seattle School District's 115 fields.
- ★ Nearly all Seattle School District grass fields are well used, limiting Parks use of these facilities.

Supporting Observation #2.2

- ★ Parks has attempted to increase field capacity to meet the future scheduling demands of sports groups.

- ★ Parks recognizes the importance of athletic fields as recreation resource for all sports groups.
- ★ Parks has planned extensively for the expansion and improvement of athletic fields.
- ★ Parks continues to install more lighting and convert grass fields to all-weather or synthetic surfaces to increase field capacity.
- ★ The 2001-02 Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program and Pro Parks Levy funding will improve the capacity of Parks' athletic fields.

PRO PARKS LEVY FUNDING



Action Item #2

- ★ No recommendation. Continue developing fields that significantly improve the capacity of the City's athletic field system and maximize the use of Pro Parks Levy funds.



Observation #3

- ★ Parks could improve the efficiency of field scheduling practices by documenting standard operating procedures and enhancing athletic field scheduling software.

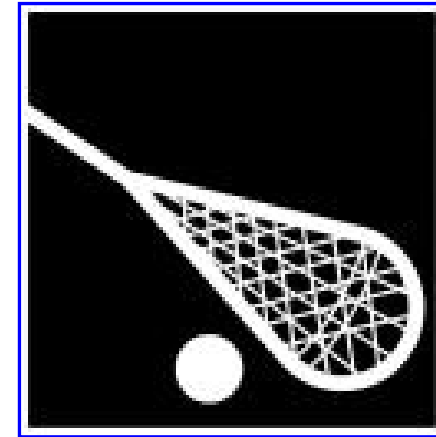
- ★ The Athletic Field Scheduling Unit has no documented standard operating procedures for the athletic field scheduling process.
- ★ The Athletic Field Scheduling Unit does not have adequate field scheduling software to efficiently service athletic field users.



Supporting Observation #3.1

- ★ **The Athletic Field Scheduling Unit has not documented standard operating procedures for daily operations.**

- ★ No one currently backfills the Athletic Facilities Scheduler position during absences because no one fully understands all the procedures.
- ★ Work in the Athletic Field Scheduling Unit slows significantly when the Scheduler is absent.



Supporting Observation #3.2

- ★ **Standard operating procedures for daily operations can enhance athletic field scheduling.**



- ★ The potential benefits of standard operating procedures for athletic field scheduling include:
 - Comprehensive documentation of the field scheduling process;
 - Consistent performance levels of the scheduling function;
 - Common understanding of the field scheduling process by Parks management and sports groups.

Supporting Observation #3.3

★ **Current athletic field scheduling software does not efficiently meet Parks field scheduling needs.**

★ Two people are unable to schedule or access athletic field data at the same time.

★ The Athletic Facilities Scheduler is unable to run reports identifying unscheduled fields for specific days and fields with the current scheduling software.

★ Current field use reports only summarize games and practices, and do not include special use events.



Supporting Observation #3.4

- ★ Improved athletic field scheduling software can enhance the quality of Parks field scheduling information.



- ★ The potential benefits of enhanced athletic field scheduling software include:
 - Simultaneous, multiple user access to the scheduling database;
 - Increased search capabilities to identify field availability;
 - Greater accuracy of field use reports;
 - Improved reporting capabilities.

Action Items #3

- ★ Develop standard operating procedures for the athletic field scheduling process.

- ★ Cross-train Parks personnel to backfill for the Athletic Facilities Scheduler position during absences.



Action Items #3

- ★ Short Term: Enhance the current FoxPro scheduling software to allow simultaneous, multiple users and increase query capabilities as soon as possible.
- ★ Long Term: Examine new athletic field scheduling products, such as CLASS, to ensure compatibility with scheduling and accounting staff needs, while maintaining or exceeding current operating speed.

- ★ Develop regular “Unscheduled Field Reports” to help the Athletic Facilities Scheduler work with leagues to maximize field use once the athletic field scheduling software is improved.

- ★ Include all athletic field uses in the “Summary Field Use Report” to accurately represent all scheduled events.

Observation #4

★ Parks could improve the efficiency of complaint resolution by updating complaint procedures.

- ★ Parks' current complaint/comment policy is more than 14 years old.
- ★ Parks maintains manual complaint records.
- ★ Parks' internet customer comment sheet is partially completed.
- ★ Most Parks' complaints are handled administratively.



Supporting Observation #4.1


- ★ Parks current complaint/comments policy is outdated and does not reflect current operating procedures.

- ★ The Parks Customer Survey website page (shown on the right) contains a pre-marked form.
- ★ Complaints are chronologically logged by hand.
- ★ Complaint notice sheets are handwritten and sent via interoffice mail.
- ★ Frequent staff changes inhibit the consistent handling of complaints.

Seattle Parks and Recreation Customer Survey

City of Seattle Web | Seattle Services | City Home Pages

Customer Comments



Dear Visitor:
The Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation is working to improve our service to you. Please help us by completing this form and returning this form to us.
Thank you for visiting Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Ken Bounds
Superintendent

Name of Facility or Park visited:

Date of visit:

What was the nature of your visit?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The recreation facility or park was easy to find.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The staff were courteous, professional and knowledgeable.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The recreation facility or park was clean and well-maintained.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to use the facility or park feature I came to use.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, I am satisfied with the experience I had at the facility or park.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/custsurvey.htm> (1 of 2) [10/18/01 10:58:39]

Supporting Observation #4.2

- ★ Improved complaint procedures and electronic data can promote more efficient resolution of field scheduling complaints.



- ★ The potential benefits of an improved complaint process and tracking system include:
 - Updated complaint procedures to reflect field scheduling needs and the needs of other Parks' units.
 - Collection and retention of more consistent complaint data.
 - Faster issue analysis and corrective action using electronic data.

Action Items #4

- ★ Update Parks' Complaints/Compliments Policies and Procedures (March '87) to reflect current operating practices.

- ★ Unmark the five questions of the Parks website customer survey regarding finding a facility, staff, facility cleanliness/maintenance, usability of the facility and overall experience to minimize inaccurate survey results.



Action Items #4

- ★ Continue developing a computerized complaint notice sheet and log to efficiently disseminate, analyze and resolve complaints.





City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

Date: January 18, 2002

To: Susan Cohen, Auditor
City of Seattle

From: Kenneth R. Bounds, Superintendent

Subject: Parks' Athletic Field Scheduling Review

We have reviewed the draft report dated January 11, 2002. We compliment you and your staff on the format, which is easy to read and understand, and for your thoroughness and fairness in conducting this review.

In general, we believe your suggested action items should improve the understanding and administration of our field scheduling policies and procedures. Therefore, we offer the following timelines for implementation of the major actions:

1. Review Scheduling Policy: We plan to review our field scheduling policy and procedures in January and February. We will present draft proposed revisions to the Board of Parks Commissioners in March with completion of the revisions likely in May of this year.
2. Add Scheduling Priorities and Field Closures - Limitations with Sports Participation Policy. We will add this information to our annual dissemination of the participation policy (refer to action item #3).
3. Disseminate Sports Participation Policy Annually: We will add this action to our standard procedures. We will disseminate the policy beginning in February of this year.
4. Develop Standard Operating Procedures: This action is underway. We will finalize the procedures upon completion of revisions to the field scheduling policies. We anticipate completing it in June of this year. Our only comment with this action item has to do with expectations. While we can do a better job of documenting the scheduling process, we must remain mindful that field scheduling involves consideration of multiple factors and a variety of demands. Considerable judgement will always be involved in scheduling athletic fields.



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5. Cross-Training Parks Personnel for Field Scheduling: This action is underway. We plan to have at least two employees in the Citywide Athletics office cross-trained at all times.
6. Improved Field Scheduling Software: We hope to have the software improved by June of this year.
7. Update Complaints / Compliments Policy: This action is underway. We hope to have a revised policy completed by March.

We will report progress on these actions to you in December of this year. Once again we extend our thanks to Dan Nygaard, Susan Baugh, Minh Pham, and Thao Vu for their professionalism and thoughtful approach to this review.

cc: Greg Nickels, Mayor

KRB;fhh

Office of City Auditor Report Evaluation Form

FAX...WRITE...CALL...DROP BY... HELP US SERVE THE CITY BETTER

Our mission at the Office of City Auditor is to help assist the City in achieving honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout the City government. We service the public interest by providing the Mayor, the City Council and City managers with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of the citizens of Seattle.

Your feedback helps us do a better job. If you could please take a few minutes to fill out the following information for us, it will help us assess and improve our work.

* * * * *

Report: **Department of Parks and Recreation Athletic Field Scheduling Review**

Please rate the following elements of this report by checking the appropriate box:

	Too Little	Just Right	Too Much
Background Information			
Details			
Length of Report			
Clarity of Writing			
Potential Impact			

Suggestions for our report format: _____

Suggestions for future studies: _____

Other comments, thoughts, ideas: _____

Name (Optional): _____

Thanks for taking the time to help us.

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E-mail: auditor@ci.seattle.wa.us

Drop by and visit: 24th Floor, Key Tower

www.cityofseattle.net/audit/